

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 02799 140737Z

ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02
OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 AGR-01 STR-07 ITC-01
CTME-00 /112 W

-----006715 150430Z /64

R 140618Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2990

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL PERTH

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 2799

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: ELAB, AS, EPAP

SUBJ: HAWKE COOLS FARMER-LABOR SHEEP EXPORT DISPUTE

REF: CANBERRA 2549, 02682 AND 2763

1. NON-STOP EFFORTS BY AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS (A.C.T.U.) PRESIDENT BOB HAWKE, HAS RESULTED IN A "COOLING OFF" PERIOD IN THE DISPUTE BETWEEN MILITANT SHEEP GROWERS AND LEFT-WING MEAT WORKER MEMBERS. IN A SERIES OF MEETINGS WITH MEAT WORKER LEADERS, WOOL GROWERS, GRAZIERS, AND THE WOOL AND MEAT PRODUCERS FEDERATION, HAWKE CONVINCED THE UNIONISTS TO LIFT THE BAN ON SHEEP EXPORTS IN EXCHANGE FOR A COMMITMENT FROM NON-UNION FARMERS TO HALT LOADING OF LIVE SHEEP TO MIDDLE EAST BUYERS.

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2. HAWKE ALSO HAS BEEN CONFERRING WITH THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, ANTHONY STREET, ON A FORMULA WHICH HE HOPES CAN LEAD TO A NEGOTIATED PERMANENT SETTLEMENT AND THESE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, MEATWORKERS UNIONS, AND THE GROWER ORGANIZATIONS, ARE DUE TO BEGIN IN CANBERRA ON APRIL 19.

3. MEATWORKER UNIONS, NEVERTHELESS, IN SPITE OF HAWKE'S EFFORTS, WENT AHEAD WITH THEIR PLANNED NATIONWIDE FOUR DAY STRIKE IN PROTEST OVER THE ARREST OF 48 UNION PICKETS AT FREEMANTLE AND ALBANY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND THE USE OF NON-UNION LABOR. HAWKE SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE IT WAS IN THE UNION'S BEST INTERESTS TO GO AHEAD WITH THE STRIKE.

4. THE STRIKE, WHICH INVOLVES 40,000 MEATWORKERS (PACKING HOUSE WORKERS) IS DUE TO END AT MIDNIGHT ON APRIL 16, AND IS NOT EXPECTED TO AFFECT OVERALL MEAT SUPPLIES TO CONSUMERS. LONGSHOREMEN ARE ALSO DRIFTING BACK TO WORK AFTER A SERIES OF STOPPAGES IN AUSTRALIA'S MAJOR PORTS PROTESTING THE USE OF NON-UNION LABOR.

5. COMMENT: JOHN DUCKER, A.C.T.U. VICE PRESIDENT, WHO HAS AT TIMES BEEN CRITICAL OF HAWKE, TOLD AMBASSADOR ALSTON THE EMBASSY'S POLITICAL COUNSELOR AND LABOR ATTACHE ON APRIL 12, THAT IT WAS HAWKE ALONE WHO SAVED THE DAY. MILITANT FARMERS, ACCORDING TO DUCKER, WERE MASSED AT PORTS IN SOUTHERN AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND WERE DETERMINED TO LOAD THE SHIPS. CATTLEMEN WERE ALSO THREATENING TO STEP IN AND MAN THE SLAUGHTERHOUSES IF THE MEATWORKERS PROLONGED THEIR STRIKE. LONGSHOREMEN WERE ALSO THREATENING TO "BLACK BAN" EVERY SHIP WHICH MOVED
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THE LIVE SHEEP EXPORTS.

6. HAWKE, ACCORDING TO DUCKER, BLUNTLY TOLD THE LEADER OF THE MELBOURNE MEATWORKERS, A NOTORIOUS COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBER, THAT THEY WOULD NOT RECEIVE A.C.T.U. SUPPORT IF THEY CONTINUED THEIR BAN ON LIVE SHEEP EXPORTS. HAWKE DID, HOWEVER, VIGOROUSLY PROTEST THE USE OF NON-UNION LABOR.

7. THE MEATWORKERS, HOWEVER, ARE CONTINUING TO INSIST ON AN EXPORT RATIO OF TWO CARCASSES TO ONE LIVE SHEEP. THE PROBLEM IS EXACERBATED BY THE FACT THAT THERE HAVE BEEN WIDESPREAD LAY-OFFS OF MEATWORKERS IN RECENT MONTHS. RALPH WILLIS, A.L.P.M.P. FROM MELBOURNE TOLD THE EMBASSY'S LABOR ATTACHE THAT THERE WERE 2,000 LAY-OFFS OF MEATWORKERS IN HIS DISTRICT ALONE DURING THE LAST SIX MONTHS AND THAT ONLY 200 HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO WORK.
ALSTON

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NNN

Message Attributes

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